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Our Language and the Language of Failure

Megen O'Toole
Iowa State University

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MEGEN O'TOOLE



I believed I had failed. I struggled with using my tools eloquently, and expressing myself convincingly and completely. Though I hadn't give myself the space to realize I didn't understand my relationship to other material. I was engaging in materials that were, in fact, entirely foreign to me, even if I could use their names convincingly. The struggle was apparent if you knew me, though I didn't know what I was struggling against. Somehow however, I knew that my hands were essential, though I didn't understand why, or what they were capable of, or what I was capable of. Though at the intersection of use and capacity I have found my Architecture.

As students we have chosen to engage ourselves in architecture. Our work boldly tries to insert Us into the physical reality that defines our interactions with our body, as well as the collective body of culture. The impact of this ever-present public art form, and its use to us as human beings, is only hinted at in our training for this field of architecture. We concern ourselves with how to assemble existing standards, components, titles, and awards all in hopes of paying off piles of debt and getting the professional job we were told existed. However, when you really think about it, all of this does little to settle our fears of the universe; at least it does little to settle any of my fears. Instead, I want to invest and actually engage in what I believe to be the material pursuit of Architecture, that which is intended to bring humility, elegance, and dignity to the reality and simplicity of our lives; to make sense of being human.

ARCHITECTURE IS ALL ABOUT CAPACITY

As humans, we rely heavily on our hands to carry out our thoughts and convictions. Our hands, with support from our senses, also communicate back to us what actually exists and our capacity to carry out our intentions. Because they recognize our hands they can also help us to undo them. Through our curiosity they describe to us what is possible beyond what we can conceive. Knowledge necessary for us to carry out our work "comes from not knowing what really happens as you work, how the materials respond, and how that response (and resistance) suggest new ideas to you. It's the real and ordinary changes that matter [it] is about carrying them out, and materials are what carry them out. Because they are reliable." This dialogue between us and our material world is the work we ultimately produce: an investment. Therefore, to engage ourselves within our Architecture means more than completing a course of coursework and becoming certified. Architecture is instead the medium in which we chose to see evidence of our actions upon the world; therefore, it must communicate, be expressive.

- (1) *One of the most important things in architecture is the ability to communicate. It's not just about the physical form, but about the story it tells.*
- (2) *Architecture is a language. It's a way of saying things without words. It's a way of saying things that words can't say.*
- (3) *Architecture is a way of saying things that words can't say. It's a way of saying things that words can't say.*

invest meaning into material
ests within us knowledge, a
tion of who we are and the
eties that bind us to this world.
ities like tension and gravity
be found within a material and
ulated by us to become more
ent or hidden or seem to defy
own inherent logic, which they
imately bound by. Therefore,
way we physically engage our
trial world is ever important to
we also come to understand
elves, our own inherent logic,
how malleable we are. Work that
becomes work done to us. Our
nship to the things we create,
ugh the interaction of making
then perceiving, can constantly
us redefine our boundaries and
we are capable of, and what our
tructure is capable of.

HUMAN CAPACITY AND MATERIAL CAPACITY; THEY SEEM TO BE SYNONYMOUS.

This interaction with our work
begs us to redefine failure. Failing
is no longer standing in front of
our work in fear that we, or what
we have done, are adequate or if we
have slaved hard enough. We already
know these things for ourselves.
Success is then to confront and
challenge the restrictions we impose
on ourselves and those restrictions
we understand to be imposed on us.
Our success is no longer based on a
rubric or checklist of tasks we can
complete. It is instead based in our
ability to engage in our world, in
the difficult, and what it is we don't
understand, through materials. We
are material engaging material. The
envelope of our body reaches out
and touches the world while it also
contains us. It is the intersection of
our use and our containment. And as
these two actions are mediated and
negotiate they creates an expressive
edge, one that is constantly
fluctuating in reaction to what we
expose our self to. "As conscious
being, we exist only in response to
other things, and we cannot know
ourselves at all without knowing
them. ...Our natures are, indeed,
elusively insubstantial- notoriously
less stable and less inherent...(2)."
Though this all hinges on our ability
to see ourselves, be critical and find
what is good(3).

This is about engaging my capacity
and finding my language and my
Architecture. It might not make
sense yet how this could be, but for
me, this is religious: a religion of
humanity.

If we chose to accept without
understanding, create without
regard for our affect, and make
our choices based on ease there is
absolutely no dignity in what it is we
do. Furthermore if we know longer
experience our environments effects
upon us, and understand how to
affect our world with our own hands
how are we ever going to be able
to instill a sense of awe and breath
within our work, as if it is somehow
alive. We live in a world of flimsy
constructions of all kinds from
hollow-core doors, to detached social
networks, and failing economic
systems. Consequently we need to
dissect it in order to understand it
so that we might instill some solidity
within it. And we can't do this
through the removed theoretical,
statistical, and taught knowledge
with which we are feed. We need to
sate our appetite for knowledge
by forcing our brain and our hands
to constantly engage in each other
and the world surrounding us.
Engaging in architecture then
means that we are supposed to be
translators. Collecting and instilling
an understanding of being human
into our physical environment as a
service, but even more as a gift, to
human consciousness. Carving out
of the world and setting the stage for
the ritual of our every day life.